

REASONS FOR THE SEASONS BEING DELAYED

THE TITLE of this item is deliberately designed to qualify for someone's collection of ambiguous headlines. Actually it has nothing to do with the fact that spring seemed to come late—if at all—to the Bay Area this year. Rather, it refers to a somewhat premature announcement in the April News LETTER which promised an April 15 opening for a new permanent exhibit in the Planetarium foyer entitled "Reasons for the Seasons." We did not press the Exhibits Department for reasons for "Reasons for the Seasons" being delayed unseasonably—we trust it was not unreasonably, and let it go with the announcement that the exhibit designed to make the seasons seem reasonable and not just the whim of the Weather Bureau will be visible through the summer fog in the Hall of Astronomy about July 1.

BOTANY CLUB FUND GROWS

JOHN THOMAS HOWELL, president of the California Botanical Club and curator of botany here at the Academy, announces the receipt of a substantial gift to the Club's endowment fund. The donor is Dr. William Barclay Stephens, Honorary Curator of Horology.

Since its establishment in January of this year, the California Botanical Club Endowment Fund has grown to almost 1200 dollars. Howell is gratified not only by the rate at which the fund is growing but by the number of persons who have participated. Approximately sixty separate contributions have been received. Howell thinks this is indeed an auspicious beginning for an endowment which he hopes will continue to receive support. Just as a suggestion he advises we show this item to friends who might be interested—they can make their checks out to the California Academy of Sciences, designating them for the Botany Club Endowment Fund. Contributions are deductible for income tax purposes.

VONSEN COLLECTION OF MINERALS

ONE of the outstanding new permanent exhibits at the Academy has been the sample of beautiful crystalline minerals from the Vonsen Collection. Though the display will not be increased at present, it will interest mineralogists that the remainder of this best mineral collection west of the Mississippi will soon be at the Academy, its permanent home.

FLASH—No SUMMER STAR MEETS

No MEETINGS of the Academy's Astronomy Section will be held during July and August, according to Leon Salanave, Section leader.

NEW MEMBERS

THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS were elected by the Council at its June 14 meeting:

REGULAR MEMBERSHIP

Miss Jean Gibson
Mr. Fletcher Rogers
Mrs. Lenore B. Woodward

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

Mr. William W. Ornduff

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

Michael Blackford
Ralph S. Boomer

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U. S. Army Air Force Photo

METEOR CRATER, ARIZONA

Looking north. The diagonal road to the left connects with U. S. 66 in the middle distance. Just below the horizon line is the Little Colorado River gorge in the Painted Desert, leading into the Grand Canyon at the far left. (See page 2.)

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July Announcement

THE REGULAR JULY MEETING will be held at 8:15 p. m., Tuesday, July 12, in the May Treat Morrison Auditorium. Dr. H. H. Nininger, founder of the American Meteorite Museum and owner of the world's largest private collection of meteorites, will give an illustrated lecture on

"METEOR CRATER"

Dr. Nininger speaks from a background of almost 32 years of meteoritic research. Originally trained in biology, he taught chemistry and physics early in his career in addition to biological subjects. By "early in his career" we mean the period before November 9, 1923, the date on which he witnessed the fall of a meteorite in Kansas. The event proved to be a turning point in Dr. Nininger's life. Since that day, he and his co-worker, Mrs. Nininger, have discovered more new meteorites than have all other American institutions and individual scientists combined.

In 1926 Dr. Nininger began his studies of the vast meteorite crater in Arizona. After several visits to the crater, he secured help from the American Philosophical Society in 1939 for extensive research on the distribution of small fragments around the crater. He has carried on the work since then on frequent visits. With the founding of the American Meteorite Museum, now at Sedona (at the mouth of beautiful Oak Creek Canyon and about 43 miles west of the crater as the meteorite flies), Dr. Nininger's staff put into effect an extensive study program during the years 1947-49. The materials collected have kept him in specimens for the studies in which he hopes to find out just what happened on that day about 50,000 years ago with no witnesses.

The result, so far, has been a number of new theories about the giant crater, all of which Dr. Nininger will review in his talk. He regards his discovery of "impactite" as the most important of his career. Also of major importance—the matter of greatest interest to most people, in fact—is his answer to the question, Where is the meteorite? People have been looking for it for at least 60 years, even spending millions to drill the bottom of the crater for the wealth in metal that "must be there." Dr. Nininger believes he has found it, not by drilling but by walking. His theory is that the meteorite vaporized upon impact and that condensation of the vapor cloud rained billions of enriched nickel-iron-cobalt particles upon the plain surrounding Meteor Crater. He describes the missive as a 500,000-ton baby planet—says it exploded with atomic-energy violence upon arrival.

Dr. Nininger is a Fellow of the A. A. A. S.; a member of the American Astro-

nomical Union; a Fellow and past president of the Kansas Academy of Science; and a founder and president of the Meteoritical Society of America. He received his education in the State College of Oklahoma; McPherson College, Kansas; Pomona College; and the University of California.

The public is cordially invited to hear Dr. Nininger.

"PITTS DAY" AT GEM SHOW

SATURDAY, July 9, 1955, will be known as William Burton Pitts Day at the International Gem and Mineral Exposition of San Francisco, July 8, 9, and 10. And all of us here think that is an excellent way to start off a mineralogical convention—every day the Academy staff members (those who work in North American Hall, at least) pass by many beautiful examples of Pitts' lapidary skill, on permanent display, or may stop and see what new specimen he is polishing in his back-room shop.

The show will be held in the Civic Auditorium. Host for the exposition, which is in conjunction with the 16th annual convention of the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies, is the San Francisco Gem and Mineral Society, Inc. The local society, of which Pitts is a Charter as well as a Life Member, has invited him to show his mineral transparencies (thin sections cut from stones) on the last two days of the meeting. The showings will be at 3 p. m., Saturday, July 9, and at 1 p. m., Sunday, July 10.

Some of the world's rarest examples of precious minerals, from as far away as Australia, have been gathered together for the San Francisco show. And of course there will be many examples and demonstrations of the art and craft of the lapidary.

MAMMALOGISTS ELECT

AT ITS 35th Annual meeting, held at the University of Southern California the week of June 13, the American Society of Mammalogists reelected Dr. Robert T. Orr to his third term as vice-president. In line with the prevailing prejudice against third terms in the same office, the Academy hopes its bird and mammal curator's next move will be up a notch.

BAJA OR BUST

ONE OF THE ACADEMY'S two Chevrolet suburban-model station wagons was recently rushed to the shop for general overhaul and apple-pie conditioning, when it was noised through channels that another Baja California expedition was in the wind. Ready for the roughest roads are—besides the Chev—Joseph R. Slevin, veteran expeditioner and curator of herpetology; Dr. Robert T. Orr, curator of birds and mammals, who has also been there before; and Cecil Tose, preparator of exhibits, who hasn't. By the time the latter gentleman has finished skinning and preparing the reptiles, birds, and animals collected by the first-named gentlemen, he may wish he *hadn't*. We are not sure whether the chosen station wagon is the one that has been to Baja before—but when it crawls into the garage alongside its mate, towards the end of July, there won't be the slightest doubt as to which one was there most recently.